

People are complicated.

So, lately I've noticed myself
trying to simplify my sermons.

I know that you can handle depth and confusion,
but the first person a preacher has to preach to
is himself.

And so I've been trying to simplify things.

People are complicated.

That might be so simple as to be meaningless.
Everybody knows that people are complicated.

Look in the Bible
and you see it straight away.

The first people had just one rule
...and they broke it.
The first death was a murder,
and there were only four people around at the time.

Even when life seems simple,
people are complicated.

Just look at David.

A few weeks ago
we heard the story of God naming David
as the king over Israel.

The crown didn't fall on his head straightaway.
Instead, David was God's choice,
and then David had to figure out how to make it come to pass.

People are complicated,
and I don't know that anyone exemplifies this better
than David.

He's always got an angle.
First he joins Saul,
the man he's supposed to replace as king.
He knows there's this great Philistine giant.

Everyone is afraid to fight Goliath,
and so David goes around asking,
"What will you give to the man who defeats Goliath?"

He doesn't do it for God;
he doesn't do it for his countrymen;
David slings the rock into Goliath's forehead
in order that David might advance.

David was a terrorist,
fighting against his own people when it suited him,
and then blaming it all on the hated Philistines.

And then sometimes,
he fought WITH the hated Philistines,
when it suited him,
when it meant that he could gain something from it.

And here in today's reading,
we are halfway through David's story.
He is complicated as ever.

Having defeated his rival Saul,
David mourns over the death of the man he has been battling.
Moreover,
David mourns for Jonathan,
Saul's son and David's own dear friend.

We are all complicated.
David exemplifies this.

We fight those we love;
we mourn even in victory;
we aren't always sure what victory even means.

Like all of us,
David is a mess.

All this mess,
and he is *a man after God's own heart*.

All this,
and we still aren't done.

David isn't just complicated.
He is perhaps the most complicated person who ever lived.

David is the king,
leading the people into battle.
Then he's the wild dancer
in the victory parade back into Jerusalem,
dancing right out of his robe,
and not caring one bit if others are ashamed of him.

And then there's Bathsheba,
the wife of Uriah the Hittite.
David is no longer leading from the front lines.
Instead, he's back home while his armies do battle.
And he spots a woman,
and he uses his power to take her.

Like all sin, it compounds,
one thing after the other.
She gets pregnant;
she's the wife of one of his generals,
a general whose death David arranges,
so that no one will find out what he has done.

A man after God's own heart.

David is also the Psalmist.

We call the first five books of the Bible
The Five Books of Moses,
but no one really thinks that Moses wrote them.

But the Psalms are different.
Perhaps David did not write all 150,
but scholars believe he likely wrote many of them.

And that makes sense.

The Psalms are full of exultation:
the wild dancer,
unashamed of his joy.

The Psalms are full of bitterness and anger and regret:
the maniacal king
taking what he wants
and covering his tracks at all costs.

The Psalms are full of triumphant expectation:
the simple shepherd boy who slays a giant,
as if out of a mythical story of old.

People are complicated.

God chooses complicated people.
God chooses all of us.

That is the grace of David's story.
You can never be too complicated for God.

Just look at David,
the shepherd,
the king,
the Psalmist
- God chose him
all along the way.

God redeemed him,
every wretched step,
every triumphant step,
every step of the way.

Do you ever wonder what God chose you for,
wonder exactly what your purpose in this world might be?

Good.
Me too.

If scripture is any guide,
then the answer is complicated.
The answer won't always make sense.
The answer will require near constant redemption
and resurrection
and new life.

But never,
not for a second,
never doubt that God. Has. Chosen. You.

For what?
I can't be sure.

But that's why we're here
- to figure it out.
Together.